



"keeping it fair, for contractors and workers"

August 23, 2000

General Services Administration
FAR Secretariat (MVR)
ATTN: Laurie Duarte
1800 F. Street, NW, Room 4035
Washington, DC 20405

FAR Case 2001-014

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Re: FAR Case 1999-010

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Illinois, Indiana, Iowa Foundation For Fair Contracting, I am writing to express our support for the proposed contractor responsibility regulations issued on June 30, 2000. This organization applauds the efforts of the administration to move forward with this important undertaking.

Caveat emptor (Latin: "let the buyer beware"). These are words our own government should heed well when contracting construction services. Unlike goods in the marketplace where defects may be readily visible, the unknown product delivered by an unqualified or unethical contractor penalizes the government and taxpayer twice. The first time is when a job comes in late, faulty, and/or when wages intended for workers are kept for profit instead of product. The second time is when the project has to be re-bid or completely redone. It is not unrealistic to demand that a contractor be knowledgeable and "responsible" while constructing public works ventures.

The time has come for responsible reform in the Federal Construction arena. Defining responsible contractors and responsible bidders in the workplace makes good common sense for government and taxpayers.

Federal construction procurement should not embrace contractors who violate basic employment rules, ignore safety laws, pad contract costs, and who fail to follow contract specifications or use federal dollars to thwart democracy in the workplace.

Federal agencies should not reward contractors who have a bad track record of compliance. Allowing lawbreakers to continue receiving federal tax dollars sends the wrong message to all the reputable contractors struggling to follow the rules. Federal agencies need to look beyond the 'lowest dollar bid' to issues of business ethics, compliance, and general responsibility in making a determination to award a contract, and responsible contractor rules are the answer.

In the area our foundation represents we have 9 local responsible bidder ordinances passed by counties, villages, and cities, all have been embraced and encouraged. What has made these ordinances so great is that they are working. Big government should not be afraid to embrace lessons that work well for local government.

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Contractors who cheat workers out of the legal prevailing wage, and continue breaking labor laws while demanding government reimbursement must also end, this regulation addresses those issues.

These regulations will protect workers, contractors, taxpayers, and government, while sending a message to contractors that cheating and irresponsibility will not be condoned. This will also reinforce faith in government to a people tired of paying for \$500 dollar toilet seats, and \$75 screws.

It is time for a change in the way construction procurement and contract services are handled, lets make it fair for all, we urge you to publish the final regulations without delay.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Quigley
Executive Director
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